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By Andreas Bard

Evening Bulletin, Walla Walla, Washington

1841  
Garnier

Homo sum et nullum hu-  
manum a me repudio  
-TERENCE

## Foreword



The tragedy of "GIAFAR" is not a creature of the imagination. It is based upon a strictly historical plot. The cruelty which Haroun Al Raschid displayed toward his Grand Vizier and the beautiful Abassa are perhaps the only stain upon the character of the otherwise noble-minded Khalif of Bagdad.

Stage adaptation has not been primarily considered in the writing of the play. It has been the aim of the writer to present, upon an Oriental background of years ago, the unageing problem of the conflict between soul and sense in the evolution of Love.



## Dramatis Personae



HAROUN AL RASCHID, Khalif of  
Bagdad.

GIAFAR, Grand Vizier.

ABASSA, the Khalif's Sister.

HASFANA, Abassa's Companion.

OMAR, Chief of Saracen Army.

YAHIA, Giafar's Father.

FADHEL, Giafar's Brother.

OBEIDAH }  
KHALED } Counsellors to the Khalif.

ABU NUWAS, a Court Poet.

ZULEIKA, an Old Sooth-Sayer of the  
Harem.



Slaves, Eunuchs, Guards, Officers of State,  
Women of the Harem.

SCENE: Bagdad. TIME: Beginning of the  
Ninth Century.

## Act I.

SCENE—Magnificent apartments of Abassa, richly decorated with tapestry. A fountain in the center. The female train of the harem reclining on embroidered cushions on both sides of a high couch on which Abassa is seated; Hasfana at her feet holding a zither; on the other side of the couch, Zuleika. Two eunuchs stationed at the entrance of the apartment. The scene is illuminated by the crimson lights of the sunset which through a columned opening in the rear reveals the towers of Bagdad.

### ABASSA.

I'm tired, Hasfana, with these gilded  
follies!  
Our roses, hardly plucked, begin to  
wither;  
Our jewels cease to charm, and e'en the  
music  
Of waters, falling in melodious rhythm,  
At last grows dull. My heart, the des-  
ert pilgrim,  
Finds its oasis fading as mirage.  
And as the cooling breeze that woos at  
twilight  
The burning plains, will die, ere stars  
appear,  
There's naught that lasts.

### HASFANA.

Save love, my fair Abassa!

*ABASSA.*

Love's but a pleasing phrase, its meaning vague.

Once, when young Omar dared to raise  
my veil,  
And sent his fiery glance into my soul,  
There was a flash, soon lost amid the  
clouds.

*HASFANA.*

Why then took'st pain to keep the fatal  
secret  
From Haroun's knowledge?

*ABASSA.*

Little would I gain  
By making skulls to season dreams  
withal.

*HASFANA.*

Alas, I tremble for the life of Omar.  
Should Haroun know the truth. The  
mighty Khalif  
Is kind and generous; but where  
Abassa  
Is lightly treated, he shows claws and  
teeth.

*ABASSA.*

Thou would'st not fear for Omar, were  
he not  
Close allied to thy heart.

*HASFANA.*

Oh, mock me not!  
Thou art the sun of beauty, all the stars  
Must pay thee homage, but the humble  
light  
That flickers in my heart burns out un-  
noticed.

*ABASSA.*

I pity thee, yet, though unloved, thou  
lovest,  
Two deep emotions never known to me,  
And therefore envied.

*HASFANA.*

Here's a song, Abassa,  
That fits thy life. Two verses only:  
Listen.

(Singing to the accompaniment of the zither.)

The flowers, so fragrant and so fair,  
Soon with their bloom must part;  
To perfume turned, enrich the air  
Where thou, Beloved, art.

The dreamers who behold thy charms,  
In love for thee have blushed,  
And fain would linger in thy arms—  
To honor thee, are crushed.

*ABASSA.*

Think'st thou of Abdul?

*HASFANA.*

Aye, of Osman, Hossein  
And hosts of others who, by passion  
spurred,  
Have crossed thy path; thy beauty took  
them captive,  
Until the headsman's sword gave free-  
dom.

*ABASSA.*

(Pensively.)

Love?  
From all thou sayest I perceive most  
clearly  
That 'tis a two-edged sword; it cuts as  
well  
As conquers.

*HASFANA.*

And whose blade's a shining mirror,  
Wherein the quality of hearts is tested.

*ABASSA.*

Love left thee shipwrecked, yet upon  
the rock  
That crushed thy ill-starred boat, thou  
seekest refuge!  
Ere thou met'st Omar, life to thee was  
pleasing,  
A gentle breath astir in myrtle groves;  
Now tears are hidden 'neath thy sweet-  
est smiles,

And sighs, unnatural to thy tender  
years,  
Make discord in thy speech.

*HASFANA.*

Extract the thorn,  
Alas, the rose goes too! The thought of  
Omar  
Is yet the vital spark of all my days;  
Without it there is naught. If he did  
love me  
The hope of Paradise would never tempt  
me  
To leave this earth; and now the hope  
of earth,  
The fond illusion that through chance  
or change  
His heart may yet be won, makes Para-  
dise  
E'en of my lonely hours.

*ABASSA.*

This must be love!  
For such a dream of bliss I glad would  
give  
My pearls and palaces, my rank and  
riches.  
What would'st thou think, Hasfana,  
should I choose  
To love thy Omar who, thou say'st,  
loves me?

*HASFANA.*

Love is no slave that comes at beck and  
call;  
She is the mistress of all hearts; may'st  
open  
The windows of the soul, yet can'st not  
hasten  
The coming of the sun.

*ABASSA.*

Speak thou, Zuleika!

*ZULEIKA.*

Would'st learn of withered flesh, how to  
embrace?  
Would'st ask this toothless mouth, what  
is a kiss?  
I'll answer: Love is not a butterfly  
That dances blithely from bud to blossom;  
It is a flame, of hell and passion born,  
That lights a fever in the dizzy brain  
And rages madly till it spreads contagion  
Upon another. When the fire is  
quenched,  
A vampire sucks the essence of the soul,  
Until the darling dream becomes a  
nightmare!  
Love is a snake—

(Enter)

*A SLAVE.*

The Ruler of the Faithful!

*ABASSA.*

I am prepared to meet my noble  
brother;  
Admit the Khalif.

*AL RASCHID.*

Allah and his prophet  
Bless thee, my fair Abassa! How I love  
To enter here, where dreams and music  
float  
Like gentle spirits in the perfumed air!  
Indeed, there's naught in all my vast  
domain  
Which to my heart can give such bound-  
less rapture  
As to behold thy beauty.

*ABASSA.*

Surely none?

*AL RASCHID.*

One other only of this world's rare  
pleasures  
I ask besides Abassa's charms, the  
thoughts  
Of my Giafar; take these two com-  
bined



And I would give my realm from far-  
thest shores,  
E'en to the gates of Bagdad, in ex-  
change.

*ABASSA.*

When every tongue, where'er the cres-  
cent rules,  
Proclaims Giafar's name with fond de-  
votion;  
Tell me, my brother, why Abassa's eye  
Shall ne'er behold him.

*AL RASCHID.*

'Tis against the laws  
Of thy great ancestors.      The royal  
blood  
That flows within thy veins will e'er  
stand guard  
Against the lesser grade. I love Giafar,  
Yet higher mountains rise 'twixt thee  
and him  
Than mortal foot has ever dared to  
climb.

*ABASSA.*

Thou art omnipotent. I pray thee,  
brother,  
Relieve thy lonely sister's idle hours  
By the companionship of some great  
mind,

To cheer the day, to fill with dreams the  
night,  
To give a soul to this love-longing form.

*AL RASCHID.*

How could'st thou read my thought, ere  
yet I mentioned  
Aught that pertained to thee and to  
Giafar?

'Tis woman's intuition which to reason,  
Like sun to moon, appears the greater  
light.

Listen, fair sister, Haroun has decided  
To merge two pleasures into one grand  
dream

Of happiness; thy beauty and the brain  
Of our Vizier shall now provide the  
pillars

O'er which the temple of supremest bliss  
Will rise all-glorious; in this very hour  
I will unite you to be man and wife.

*ABASSA.*

Enthrilling thought! New worlds un-  
fold before me.

*AL RASCHID.*

Aye, sweet Abassa, heretofore hast been  
A lily white adrift on golden streams,  
But now hast reached the sea; a fair-  
winged swan

Upon the shoreless ocean of true love  
May'st glide unfettered.

*ABASSA.*

Would my throbbing heart  
Could move apace with thy fleet-footed  
word!

*AL RASCHID.*

Soon night will fold her wings before  
the dawn;  
Have patience! Meanwhile I demand  
of thee  
A certain promise.

*ABASSA.*

Granted, ere thou speakest!

*AL RASCHID.*

That you will never meet, when I am  
absent.

*ABASSA.*

Was ever mortal marriage thus re-  
stricted?

*AL RASCHID.*

A marriage of two minds, that lasting  
union,  
Which, like the tree, survives the falling  
leaves,  
The bubbles of the blood.

*ABASSA.*

In love the changes  
Of ebb and tide, the dream and the  
awaking,  
The longing and the loss are Nature's  
self.

*AL RASCHID.*

Here is no argument, but my decree:  
Wilt thou obey it?

*ABASSA.*

Aye, it were not well,  
If the young flower that wooes the south-  
wind's kiss  
And ripens 'neath the sun, would show  
ill humor  
When the same elements that gave it  
bloom  
Cause it to droop. Whatever thou hast  
granted,  
Kind brother, though a favor limited,  
Is yet surpassing all I e'er dared hope.  
Accept Abassa's thanks!

*AL RASCHID.*

(To the three slave-girls who have entered  
with him.)

Proceed, fair maidens,  
To crown our queen on love's enthrill-  
ing throne!

Adorn with flowers her brow, her neck  
with pearls,  
And o'er her lovely eyes place with devotion  
The virgin-veil, her vow's unchanging  
symbol!

*FIRST SLAVE.*

(Placing a wreath of roses on Abassa's forehead.)

Many a sweet flower,  
Nursed in the earth,  
By the rays of the sunshine  
Is kissed into birth.  
Yet it leaves soil and sunlight,  
To circle thy brow,  
For the sweetest of flowers,  
Fair maiden, art thou!

*SECOND SLAVE*

(Placing the necklace.)

Many a rich pearl  
Lies deep in the sea  
And delights in eternal  
Tranquility.  
Yet it leaves its fond dreams  
On the ocean's breast,  
For it longs, queen of pearls,  
Near thy bosom to rest.

### *THIRD SLAVE.*

(Covering Abassa's face with a veil.)

Many a rare jewel  
Is hid in the mine,  
That it may in the darkness  
The brighter shine.  
But the veil that will cover  
Thy beautiful eyes,  
Conceals of all jewels  
The loveliest prize!

### *AL RASCHID.*

And ye, fair creatures of these festive  
halls,  
Dance, sing and pass the time in merri-  
ment,  
While I proceed to ask our good Giafar  
To enter here. Let rapture fill the air,  
When the divinest mind unites with  
Bagdad's  
Divinest form; here Nature reached her  
goal.

(Exit Al Raschid.)

(The women form a group and dance to the  
accompaniments of stringed instruments.)

### *ABASSA.*

Sing me another song, thou dear Has-  
fana.  
My soul is greatly moved and naught  
save music  
Can calm the storm.

*HASFANA.*

I'll sing a riddle; listen!

(Sings)

A light shone brightly through the night  
A wandering moth in lonely flight  
For warmth and refuge yearned;  
And, when it saw the dazzling flame,  
Too near the deadly fire it came—  
The hapless wings were burned.

*ABASSA.*

Ha! I divine thy meaning.

*HASFANA.*

Al, I tremble  
For promises that are at war with Nature.

*ZULEIKA.*

(Aside.)

At last the fates have shown a way to  
me;  
I'll be revenged for my captivity!

*ABASSA.*

My heart is thrilling with a thousand  
raptures  
To meet Giafar. Know'st thou him,  
Hasfana?

*HASFANA.*

Only his songs, which, like the dew of  
heaven  
Drop on the fairest blossoms of the soul.

*ABASSA.*

His wisdom has no equal, even Haroun  
Bows to its mandates and the mighty  
empire  
Awaits his judgment in the crucial hour.  
Hast ever seen him? Is he young and  
handsome?

*HASFANA.*

Much older he than thou; some silver  
threads,  
Like winter's heralds, 'neath his heavy  
locks  
Reveal at times that summer is past  
passing.

*ABASSA.*

Still he is tall and handsome?

*HASFANA.*

Not like Omar;  
In whose impassioned eye are subtly  
mingled  
The daring soldier and the languid  
lover,  
A mid-day sun. But ev'ning's restful  
twilight,  
The noble harmony of thought and sad-  
ness,  
Adorn Giafar's brow.



*ABASSA.*

Hush, here he comes.

(Enter Al Raschid and Giafar.)

*AL RASCHID.*

I give to thee, loved minister and friend,  
The sweetest flower, fresh from Nature's  
bosom,  
My own Abassa.

*GIAFAR.*

Oh, most gracious Khalif,  
Too deep for thought thy kindness!

*AL RASCHID.*

Yet thy merit  
Excels it.

*ABASSA.*

(Aside.)

Throbs and thrills o'erwhelm me.

(Loud.)

My love to thee, Giafar; and to thee,  
Most noble brother, lasting gratitude!

*AL RASCHID.*

This bond, like Sirius and Aldebaran  
Shines in our heav'n, a constellation  
fair,

Oh, may it never fade! The Christians  
fancy,  
The deity is triune and, though mystic

The thought, yet do I clearly now perceive  
That as in man, who but reflects his  
Maker,  
The body, mind and soul are linked in  
one.  
So harmony is triune. Thou, Abassa,  
The form most perfect, while Giafar's  
mind  
Is wedded to it; and the soul myself  
Who thus completes the circle.

*ABASSA.*

Sacred Union,  
Which Allah may protect!

*GIAFAR.*

And guide the feeble steps  
Which Haroun's will leads on to Nature's brink  
And calls a sudden halt; 'twixt soul and  
sense,  
Contending billows, may our ship be  
firm,  
True to its chart!

*AL RASCHID.*

Thou dost not doubt, Giafar,  
That thou wilt keep the oath?

*GIAFAR.*

I pledged my life!

*AL RASCHID.*

I have thy word, Abassa?

*ABASSA.*

Aye, my honor!

*AL RASCHID.*

Raise then the veil, Hasfana, that love's  
ray  
May fall undimmed upon Giafar's way!

*HASFANA.*

The flowers seek the sunshine,  
The rivers the sea,  
The birds hasten southward,  
The heart moves to thee.  
A palm in the desert,  
A star on night's brow,  
A dream in the darkness,  
Beloved, art thou!  
The night-clouds that vanish  
Make way for the dawn—  
(Lifting the veil.)  
The sun is arising,  
The veil is withdrawn.

*GIAFAR.*

Oh wondrous vision! Here's a world  
undreamed of!

*AL RASCHID.*

Thine to admire, yet never to possess;  
At fair Abassa's side be hence thy  
    throne,  
Keep it unstained 'gainst others and—  
    thyself!  
And now in discourse, undisturbed, but  
    brief,  
Give wing to love, while on the sunset's  
    gold  
My soul will rise to Allah, and to Him  
Commend your purpose.

(Stepping toward the balcony in the rear of  
the apartment, where he remains standing  
with folded arms, his eyes toward the  
city.)

*ABASSA.*

Art thou truly mine?

*GIAFAR.*

More than I reckoned. Many a lovely  
    maiden  
I've met, yet none like thee. In poems  
    only  
Ideals, such as thou, have their abode.

*ABASSA.*

And thou, the great Giafar, to whose  
    will  
The world bows in submission—

*GIAFAR.*

Captive, aye,  
Within thy arms!

*ABASSA.*

Would thou wert wholly mine!  
My heart—a snow-flushed rivulet, o'er-  
flowing  
Its narrow bed—expands into a sea  
Of boundless bliss.

*GIAFAR.*

Oh, beautiful Abassa!  
I who amid a life, with laurels laden,  
Have longed for sounds beyond sweet  
music's plea,  
For stars that fade not and for fragrant  
flowers,  
Untouched by autumn; in thy lovely  
presence  
Do grasp the depth unfathomed of the  
soul  
For bliss eterne. 'Tis nature's tender  
promise  
Of worlds to come.

*ABASSA.*

Oh, could I linger ever  
Close by thy side!

*GIAFAR.*

Alas, my hasty pledge  
Receives a troubled message from the  
heart:

Would we had never met!

*ABASSA.*

How's this, Giafar?

*GIAFAR.*

Think of our vows!

*ABASSA.*

Alas!

*AL RASCHID.*

(Coming toward them.)

'Tis time to part.

The twilight waits impatient for the  
night

And woos the evening-star. It gives  
me grief

To mar your pleasures, but I must be  
firm.

(Draws his scimitar.)

Thus resting side by side two envied  
mortals

Do symbolize to me the truth divine  
That on her throne, unshaken by the  
senses

The soul can reign supreme. And here,  
between you

I place this sword, the emblem of my  
will.  
The line is sharply drawn and by this  
weapon  
I swear that whosoever dares to shift it,  
Is doomed to die!

*GIAFAR.*

Thou hast Giafar's oath;  
Whene'er my purpose falters, I'm pre-  
pared  
For Azriel's realm.

(Taking Abassa's hand and kissing it rev-  
erently.)

This little hand shall guide me!

*ABASSA.*

To light and love! Sing us a song,  
Hasfana.  
Thy voice, like the melodious bird of  
Ajjem,  
Gives balsam to the soul and calls us  
gently  
To dreamland's shore, where memory  
and hope,  
Two changeless stars, illuminate the  
night.

## *HASFANA.*

(Singing.)

The stars with thousand golden eyes  
Keep silent watch o'er thee;  
A gentle night-wind softly sighs  
Its languid melody.

The flowers exhale their amorous balm;  
The birds dream in their nest;  
The trees are still and moonlight calm  
Enfolds the earth in rest.

My heart alone doth wildly move  
Mid silence, wide and deep,  
It seeks its rest, where thou, sweet Love,  
Where thou, sweet Love, dost sleep.

## *AL RASCHID.*

Farewell, Abassa!

## *ABASSA.*

Brother, fare thee well!  
And thou, Giafar, who like lightning  
brightened  
My sad horizon, passest all too soon  
Into the clouds, but in the aftershine  
Of memory remainest ever mine.

## *GIAFAR.*

Farewell! And by those love-lit eyes  
I'll measure  
Henceforth the rise and fall of pain and  
pleasure!

(Sinking on his knee, and kissing Abassa's  
hand, remains motionless.)



*AL RASCHID.*

(Impatiently.)

Enough!

(As Al Raschid and Giafar reach the doorway,  
Giafar casts a parting look upon Abassa  
and disappears slowly.)

*ZULEIKA.*

Tell me, Abassa?

*ABASSA.*

What would'st know, Zuleika?

*ZULEIKA.*

If ripened fruit hangs o'er a starving  
boy,

What is his impulse?

*ABASSA.*

Why, he'll eat, Zuleika.

*ZULEIKA.*

If thou put'st parched lips to a cooling  
stream,

What will they do?

*ABASSA.*

They probably will drink.

*ZULEIKA.*

If pitch and flame are thrown into the  
straw,

What dost expect?

*ABASSA.*

I think there'd be a fire.

*ZULEIKA.*

If two young bodies on a silk-soft couch  
Can coo and woo, what thinkest thou,  
Abassa ?

*ABASSA.*

On this, Zuleika, I have never thought.

*ZULEIKA.*

Aye, do not think, for:  
Thinking would be doing,  
And doing would be lying,  
And lying would be dying—  
Thus ends the sorry wooing!  
Ha! Ha!

*ABASSA.*

For shame! Out of my sight; Zuleika!

*ZULEIKA.*

Ah, proud Abassa, think'st thou thus to  
humble  
The priestess of the fates! I must obey;  
But all thy haughty dreams are doomed  
to crumble  
Thy ill-starred pledges destined to de-  
cay;  
I've been thy slave, thy pastime and thy  
nurse;  
Beware! Zuleika may yet be thy curse!

*ABASSA.*

Ha! Dost defy me? I, the Khalif's  
sister,  
Will tolerate no scorn; slaves, lead her  
hence.

*ZULEIKA.*

(To the slaves.)

Back, cowards, or I'll scorch your sex-  
less shanks!

(The eunuchs stand horrified. Zuleika moves  
slowly toward the exit; she raises a cur-  
tain with one hand and remains standing,  
her eyes on Abassa.)

Thou art Abassa; I the devil's bride;  
Henceforth to humble thee, shall be my  
pride!

Dare to oppose me!

(All stand spell-bound.)

END OF FIRST ACT.



## Act II.



SCENE—Sarazen army camping. It is dawn. Omar's tent in the center. Two guards in the foreground. Enter Abu Nuwas.

*FIRST GUARD.*

Stand and make known thyself, ere thou go'st on.

*ABU NUWAS.*

I am the laureled bard of Haroun's court.

*SECOND GUARD.*

Then thou art also barred from Omar's camp.

*FIRST GUARD.*

Give us the password.

*ABU NUWAS.*

(Raising his lyre.)

Tut! The lyre admits me.

*FIRST GUARD.*

I am no liar, nor willing to admit thee.

*ABU NUWAS.*

Hush, friends! Here comes a lady.  
Better guard

Against a tapering limb and love-lit  
eyes,  
Than draw your swords upon a harmless  
poet,  
Who battles but in words.  
(Enter Khaled and Obeidah; two black slaves  
carry a litter.)

*OBEIDAH.*

Put down the litter !  
(Seeing Nuwas.)  
How's this, friend Nuwas, why art not  
in Bagdad ?

*ABU NUWAS.*

I skim the universe and fly at random  
Upon my Pegasus from hell to heaven—  
The two antipodes of pompous nothing !

*KHALED.*

Dost mean to say that heav'n is made of  
naught ?

*ABU NUWAS.*

Or its equivalent; thy pious dreams.

*OBEIDAH.*

Thou'lt soon find out that hell's of dif-  
ferent stuff.

*ABU NUWAS.*

When thou get'st there, there will be real  
devils.

*KHALED.*

'Tis time thou mak'st a pilgrimage to  
Mecca.

*ABU NUWAS.*

Would I'd been born a dog instead of  
man!  
I should have hidden on the sacred steps  
And bit the solemn calves of kneeling  
pilgrims—  
A canine pastime which no gods resent.

*OBEIDAH.*

Enough of this!

(To the guards.)

Where is Prince Omar's tent?

*FIRST GUARD.*

(Pointing to the tent.)

'Tis this one; but the chief is resting  
still.

*ABU NUWAS.*

(Approaching the litter.)

What soft-eyed beauty hid'st thou in  
this litter?

*KHALED.*

Keep hands off, Nuwas! This is not  
for thee.

*ABU NUWAS.*

Thou art a statesman, Khaled, but  
know'st little  
Of poets' rights.

*KHALED.*

Assert thy rights then, Nuwas!  
If thou can'st conquer this our hidden  
beauty  
By song or eulogy, she shall be thine.

*ABU NUWAS.*

So fair a prize is worth a song; I'll  
try it.

(Sings.)

The poet is the king of kings,  
He rules the world alone;  
Where'er he roams on fancy's wings,  
He builds himself a throne.

The stars serve as his coronet,  
His scepter is the lyre,  
And for a pastime he can set  
A million hearts afire.

But, Love, I'd give this realm of bliss  
To thy all-ruling grace,  
If thou would'st grant me but one kiss,  
Or one sweet night's embrace.

*OBEIDAH.*

Thou coo'st in vain.

*ABU NUWAS.*

Oh sweet divinity,  
Thy beauty's heav'nly light disclose to  
me!

(The curtain is withdrawn; Zuleika's face  
becomes visible.)

*ZULEIKA.*

Whose untamed tongue is wagging?

*ABU NUWAS.*

Oh ye gods!  
I've asked the devil for one night's em-  
brace.

For friendship's sake, Obeidah, take  
my place.

(Exit.)

*ZULEIKA.*

(Leaving the Litter.)

Dismiss these witnesses!

*OBEIDAH.*

(To the guards and slaves.)

Watch at some distance:

Remove the litter hence!

(Exeunt guards and slaves.)

*ZULEIKA.*

(Holding out her hand to Obeidah.)

First the reward.



*OBEIDAH.*

(Giving her a bag of gold.)

When all is done, I'll pay thee thrice I  
promised.

*ZULEIKA.*

Zuleika never fails; you dig the pit  
And I will close the tomb upon the vic-  
tims;

I'll hide beyond yon palm, where I can  
watch

The origin and progress of the plot—  
Fate ever finds Zuleika on the spot.  
(Steps behind the palm and crouches down.)

*KHALED.*

This is the den, where the young lion  
sleeps;

Ere morning he will roar.

*OBEIDAH.*

His angry paw  
Will find the prey well fed. These  
Barmecides

Usurp each place of power in the em-  
pire.

Yahia first, and then this sprout Giafar;  
Aye, Fadhel will be next. The Persian  
witchcraft

Unbrains the Sultan. I am tired of  
words;

Let's act.

*KHALED.*

Quite true. The camel chews the cud,  
But man should act upon one good digestion.

*OBEIDAH.*

The trick is simple; watch the word  
"Abassa"  
Encrims'ning Omar's cheek; then name  
Giafar  
And place the two upon a soft-downed  
couch—  
Ha! Ha! 'Tis quite enough!

*KHALED.*

Thou claim'st the melon  
And mak'st me feed on peels; would'st  
be Vizier;  
'Tis likely thou'lt succeed. But where's  
the profit  
For me of this most dubious adventure?

*OBEIDAH.*

The onion first and afterwards the date!  
Trust thou to me.

*KHALED.*

Is there some cause to fear,  
That Omar, learning that the Khalif  
managed  
The whole affair without Giafar's wish,  
Might prove forgiving?

*OBEIDAH.*

Omar likes Giafar,  
But loves Abassa; note the difference.

*KHALED.*

And if he's told that this portentous  
marriage  
Is merely of the mind?

*OBEIDAH.*

He'll ne'er believe it!  
Think'st thou that man, three-quarters  
animal,  
Can please his palate with a pale-faced  
promise  
Near Bagdad's ripened fruit? Thou  
art a wit!

*KHALED.*

Yet Haroun thinks it.

*OBEIDAH.*

'Tis because Giafar  
Has singed his sense with magic flames  
of Balkh.  
For years the Barmecides controlled as  
priests  
The ancient Bactria. This witchcraft,  
Khaled  
Sustains their treachery. Oh, how I  
hate them!

*KHALED.*

We're trifling with these flames!

*OBEIDAH.*

Have courage, Khaled!

Place ostrich-like the eggs into the sand;  
The sun will hatch them. Omar must  
be told

That the event is still kept in suspense;  
This will arouse the demons; for a  
fact,

Though bitter, weighs much lighter on  
the mind

Than happ'nings still within the reach  
of action.

*OMAR.*

(Stepping out of his tent)

Who jars the balmy stillness of the  
night

With irksome babble? Speak! What  
brings you hither?

*OBEIDAH.*

Our friendship.

*KHALED.*

And a weighty mission!

*OMAR.*

Ah!

Old friends, indeed! Pray how is life  
in Bagdad?

In these love-longing nights, when  
moonlight showers  
Its tender rays upon the sleeping plains,  
My soul takes wing and soars o'er time  
and space  
Back to its lofty domes and minarets.  
Fond recollections!

*KHALED.*

Wilt thou soon return?

*OMAR.*

Not till I come as victor. Nicopherus,  
The Roman rebel, twice has been de-  
feated,  
But rallying his forces, on the morrow  
Will make a final stand. Then with  
the laurels  
Of conquest on my brow I'll come tri-  
umphant  
To meet the Khalif.

*OBEIDAH.*

And thy fair Abassa.

*OMAR.*

Speak not of her; too rapturous the  
thought!

*KHALED.*

Thou would'st do well to hurry,

*OMAR.*

Why thy urging?

*OBEIDAH.*

The sun gone down, the moon soon takes  
his place.

*OMAR.*

You make me curious; speak no more  
in riddles.

*OBEIDAH.*

Our lips would fain conceal the sorry  
secret.

*OMAR.*

This grim suspense is torture; give me  
facts.

*KHALED.*

A friend betrayed thee.

*OMAR.*

Ha! A friend, a traitor?  
The paradox is striking, yet unmeaning.  
I have but one friend, Khaled, many  
others

Whose presence I may cherish and  
whose favors

I know to value. But they gently pass  
From off the narrow stage of my exist-  
ence,

And leave no mark behind. But this  
my friend,  
The only friend I know in all the  
world  
Could no more be a traitor than the sun,  
Abandoning his luster, turn to ashes.  
Fear not, then, Khaled, to make known  
the snake  
Which strikes me unawares, and I will  
crush it.

*OBEIDAH.*

Hast spoken like a man. Name then  
thy friend  
And I will name thy traitor.

*OMAR.*

Daring challenge!  
I have no friend besides—

*OBEIDAH.*

Giafar!

*OMAR.*

Ha!

*KHALED.*

Prepare to hear the worst. He is the  
traitor.

*OMAR.*

May Allah burn thy tongue! Thou  
liest.

*KHALED.*

(Laying his hand on the hilt of his sword.)  
Beware!

*OBEIDAH.*

Peace, friends! Reserve your swords  
for better purpose.  
The truth should not offend. While  
thou in battle  
Fought'st for the crescent's glory, this  
Giafar,  
Lured by Al Raschid's favor, boldly  
asked  
Abassa's hand.

*OMAR.*

(Drawing his scimitar.)

Obeidah, see this blade;  
Thou know'st it well, for many a time  
we fought  
In battle side by side. Would thou  
had'st thrust it  
Into this heart, ere thou had'st thus used  
strangely  
Giafar's name! Now mark me; if thou  
liest.  
This self-same blade will pierce thy in-  
most soul  
And cut thy body into thousand atoms  
And smite the very ground to dust in-  
visible  
Where thou hast bled.



*OBEIDAH.*

Waste not thy strength on words;  
I'll furnish proof.

*OMAR.*

Then hurry. For my heart  
Craves sudden truth. Giafar! Who'd  
believe it?

*KHALED.*

Hide not thy noble brow in agony,  
Deaf to our words. The time is short  
and precious;  
Prompt action is required, if thou wilt  
yet  
Retard Giafar's plans. The Khalif  
lingers  
In doubt between his friendship and  
the pride  
Which, as an Abasside, he owes his  
sister.  
Come thou to Bagdad, for thyself alone  
Can change the treacherous current—

*OMAR.*

May it drag  
Me downward to a lightless destiny!

(Rising.)

See ye the Eastern Star in the horizon?  
It issues in the bloody day of battle;  
Today I'll spur my Arab o'er the corpses

Of thousands and my scimitar will  
carve

Its grim designs upon my pallid foes—  
Tomorrow ope the gates of Bagdad wide  
For Omar comes triumphant and as  
victor

Demands the prize! 'Tis death or fair  
Abassa.

And now, farewell; the sadness of this  
hour

O'erwhelms my heart! Forgive scant  
courtesy—

My soul seeks solace in its solitude!

(Re-enters tent.)

### *OBEIDAH.*

The scheme is excellent; that wild  
young lion,

With passion roused, will tear Giafar's  
heart

To thousand shreds, when he will learn,  
'tis done.

### *KHALED.*

Yet thou wert wise to keep the whole  
truth from him.

His all too generous heart might hesi-  
tate

To sacrifice the friends whom thus he  
loves

E'en to Abassa.

*OBEIDAH.*

Khaled, think it not.  
Blood is peculiar stuff; it nurses rea-  
son  
And strangles it as well. Men are but  
animals  
Where woman is concerned. A pretty  
skin  
Turns friends to deadly rivals. Omar  
raised  
The veil of Bagdad's beauty; saw those  
eyes  
Black as the night and deeper than the  
sea  
Those eyes which, flaming, could set  
worlds afire  
With violent passion, till a heap of  
ashes  
Would substitute this globe. I say he's  
doomed.

*KHALED.*

'Tis strange he uttered not a single word  
About Giafar, save that he did love him.

*OBEIDAH.*

Oh, scent no nightmares! He's the per-  
fect tool  
To do us service, while, the storm  
blown over,

We court the calm and bargain for the  
spoils.

(Exeunt.)

*OMAR.*

(Leaving the tent and seating himself under a  
palm tree in the foreground.)

I am alone—and yet I'm not alone.  
Despair, which shadow-like e'er dogs my  
footsteps,  
Has now a cloven tongue, proclaiming  
grimly,  
A twofold curse; Abassa and Giafar!

She who amid the din of battle lured  
me  
To rise or ruin and whose conquest  
only  
Sustained my struggling self—she's lost  
to me!

And he, the friend whose handgrasp  
meant new life,  
Who ruled my thought, my will, my in-  
most self,  
Takes smiling now the pearl for whose  
possession  
I've fathomed oceans and defied the  
stars!

Yet is thy grief with reason wedded,  
Omar?  
There is no breach of promise, save the  
crumbling  
Of pleasant dreams, born of thine own  
conceit.  
And still HE knew, SHE knew that  
their embrace  
Would crush this heart between them  
—Oh, my passion!  
(Enter.)

*A MESSENGER.*

The Khalif sends to Omar Allah's  
blessing!

*OMAR.*

What is thy mission?

*MESSENGER.*

Emp'ror Nicopherus  
Has sued for peace. The fury of thy  
sword  
Has filled with terror the retreating  
army,  
And ere thy scimitar, once more un-  
sheathed,  
Will deal a deathblow to thy bleeding  
foe,  
He seeks submission's chance.

*OMAR.*

And was it granted?

*MESSENGER.*

The Khalif argued with his counsellors  
And counting on thy bravery, con-  
tended

That Nicophorus should be wholly  
crushed.

But, listening to Giafar, who for peace  
Plead long and earnestly, he chose to  
grant

The enemy's prayer. Thou hast been  
ordered

To Bagdad to accept the Khalif's favors.

*OMAR.*

Assure the Khalif of my loyalty.

His word my law!

(Exit Messenger.)

*OMAR.*

(Alone.)

Alas! My dream of fame  
Thus crumbles into naught; I must  
return

Ere yet the wreath is won.

*ZULEIKA.*

(Stepping forward.)

But just in time

To keep the ripened fruit from burst-  
ing.

*OMAR.*

Ha!

Thou art the voice of fate that breaks  
like thunder  
Upon the sultry stillness of my thought.

*ZULEIKA.*

I will make known the pathway of the  
stars,  
If thou wilt listen.

*OMAR.*

To thy words, Zuleika,  
Inspired by magic lore, I bow with  
reverence.

*ZULEIKA.*

Abassa shall be thine, the fates have  
willed it!

*OMAR.*

Oh messenger of bliss! Guide thou my  
footsteps!

*ZULEIKA.*

But ere thou hold'st her lovely form  
embraced,  
Thou must fulfill the will of destiny  
By one brave act.

*OMAR.*

Whate'er it be, Zuleika,  
It shall be done.

*ZULEIKA.*

Exterminate the snake  
Which, in thy absence, poisoned Har-  
oun's heart  
Against thy rightful claims. Kill thou  
Giafar.

*OMAR.*

It cannot be.

*ZULEIKA.*

If thou resistest fate,  
The hand suspended will with double  
force  
Fall on thine own head; Allah is not  
mocked!

*OMAR.*

What proof hast thou to justify this  
act?

*ZULEIKA.*

Vainglorious mortal, can'st thou fathom  
dreams?  
Can'st read the mystic fiber of the hand,  
Can'st find a meaning in the book of  
stars,  
Or hear the noiseless treading of the  
fates?  
Bend thou thy haughty knee to Allah's  
mandate!

*OMAR.*

Prove thou to me Giafar's treachery  
And I will be the tool of destiny.



### *ZULEIKA.*

Zuleika's vision far transcends all reason,  
As heaven o'ertowers the earth. Yet to thy blindness  
I'll condescend. The guileless messenger  
Betrayed the secret in his simple speech :  
Who calls thee slyly from the field of glory ?  
It is Giafar who thus quenched thy star,  
Lest his might fade before the brighter light !

### *OMAR.*

Ah ! I begin to see ; it was Giafar,  
This loving friend of mine, who wanted peace,  
Lest Omar's laurels might yet win the prize,  
Abassa's couch. The spider-web is rent  
And all the anxious insects of revenge  
Have open passage. Be on guard, Giafar,  
While thou preparest Omar's Love to wed,  
His sword is flashing o'er thy bridal bed.

END OF SECOND ACT.

## Act III.



SCENE—A hall in Giafar's palace.

*YAHIA.*

I greatly fear this love will be his ruin.  
E'er since he met Abassa, he seems altered  
In thought and mien. Unsteady is his  
eye,  
His cheeks are hollow and with faltering  
step  
He goes about his work.

*FADHEL.*

The Khalif, thinking  
That this effect was caused by weight  
of duty,  
Relieved him of the office of Vizier  
And giving me this place, reserved  
Giafar  
To be his private counsellor and friend.

*YAHIA.*

Ah, 'tis not work that blasts his brilliant  
brain.  
'Tis love, which, like a storm, has raged  
most furious

Through the soft fabric of his tender  
soul.

Alas! Cursed be the day when Har-  
oun's favor

Gave birth to schemes that war with  
Nature's law.

To love and not to love, to breathe the  
fragrance

Of sweetest flower, yet never to desire it,  
To see the ripened fruit and not to  
taste it,

To hold Abassa's form and not possess  
it—

This is a task too strenuous for the gods!  
(Enter Giafar.)

*GIAFAR.*

My noble father and thou, loyal Fadhel,  
Be welcome. Much I crave your kindly  
presence

More now than ever! For my former  
self

Lies buried at the gates of the Seraglio.

*FADHEL.*

Would thou had'st never passed the  
fatal threshold!

*GIAFAR.*

Oh, Fadhel, had I known that a volcano  
Lies slumbering 'neath the fragile crust  
of reason

Which, bursting forth in flames, will  
turn to ashes  
The crumbling structures of our high  
resolves—  
If I had known this, I should ne'er  
have ventured  
On dangerous seas, but in the placid  
harbor  
Of stainless thought remained securely  
anchored.

*YAHIA.*

How deeply I do feel thine agony!  
The promises of life are still before thee,  
Giafar, while my hair, grown gray in  
service  
To Haroun and the State, foretells the  
ev'ning,  
The coming sunset. Not for me I fear.  
The aged palm in vain longs for the  
spring,  
To find its strength renewed. But thou,  
Giafar,  
Upon whose mighty thought this realm  
is founded,  
And whom the future ever beckons on-  
ward  
To greater heights, hast chosen Phaeton-like

A dangerous plaything. If thy purpose  
waivers  
No power, my son, can check the hand  
of fate.

*GIAFAR.*

Thy words I hear, oh, Father, but while  
reason,  
A willing listener, would glad consent,  
My heart points like a needle to the  
magnet,  
To her alone!

*FADHEL.*

Must, then, a pretty cheek,  
A curl of hair, a soft-skinned little  
hand  
Root up the ancient tree of Barmecides,  
That, seasoned with the royal blood of  
Persia,  
Sprang from the soil ere yet the pro-  
phet rose  
Proclaiming Allah's will?

*YAHIA.*

The Magian priesthood,  
Which in the sacred Bactria held coun-  
cil  
With the Eternal and above the earth  
Rose on the wing of prayer—their  
blood, Giafar,

Flows in thy veins. Oh, may the  
thought inspire thee  
To check the baser self; their spirit  
guide thee  
Upon the slipp'ry path 'twixt soul and  
sense  
To final triumph!

*GIAFAR.*

(Taking Yahia's hand.)

Allah bless this hand  
Which led me safely through the gold-  
en years  
Of youth and childhood, when the  
thoughtless heart  
Can treasure nothing save its own de-  
sires.  
I grew to manhood and the cares of  
office,  
The jealousies of men, their scorn and  
envy,  
Infesting ev'ry hour; the loneliness  
which islands  
Each heart upon the shoreless sea of  
chance—  
All this has taught me how to value love,  
And of such love the purest, most un-  
selfish,  
The parent's. Father, place once more  
This hand, now trembling not with age  
alone,

But with emotion, on Giafar's brow,  
Conferring strength!

(Kneeling.)

*YAHIA.*

(Blessing Giafar.)

May heaven grant thee peace!  
Whate'er betide thee, hapless son, thy  
father  
Will share thy downfall, as he shared  
thy glory.  
And as thy life has ever been the sun-  
shine  
Of days ago, so when the shadows  
fall,  
A star on midnight's sky, in fadeless  
luster  
Will shine thy father's love. Farewell,  
Giafar!

*GIAFAR.*

(Arising.)

Father, fare thee well! And thou, my  
Fadhel,  
Rest in assurance that, if mortal will  
Can turn the tide of blood in reason's  
channel,  
It shall be done!

*FADHEL.*

I judge thee not; I warn thee.  
Yet from my heart of hearts I curse the  
thought,  
Which, severing Nature's self, made  
thee the martyr  
In the unequal struggle! Fare thee  
well!

(Exeunt Fadhel and Yahia.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Alone.)

I must not yield to it. I must be firm.  
I gave my word; my honor is at stake.  
My father's life, my brother's, aye,  
Abassa's,  
Will be made subject to the Khalif's  
wrath;  
I must be firm. Base demons of the  
blood  
Obey Giafar's will. I, ruler of the  
empire,  
Ruled by the flesh? If I could but  
deny it,  
But, oh, the truth undoes my boasting  
speech—  
Abassa!

(Sinks upon a divan and buries his head in  
his hands.)

(Rising.)





Ha! I've found the clew; I will not  
See her again; will shun her lovely  
presence;  
Will starve imagination, till the flame  
Will die for want of fuel; I am re-  
solved  
To make this sacrifice. I must. I will.  
(Enter.)

*AL RASCHID.*

May Allah's sunshine scatter o'er thy  
path  
The rays of peace!

*GIAFAR.*

And make thy love  
Unchangeable!

*AL RASCHID.*

Love without loyalty  
Can profit little.

*GIAFAR.*

Thou hast given both  
In amplest measure to thy lowly ser-  
vant.

*AL RASCHID.*

Not that I raised thee to a dizzy height  
And laid our mighty empire at thy feet,  
Proved my affection as did my resolve  
To cast aside all barriers of tradition  
And lift the veil for thee of fair Abassa.

*GIAFAR.*

Nor anything this mind has e'er de-  
signed  
In solving weighty questions and in  
guiding  
The ship of state proved such complete  
devotion  
As did my oath to call Abassa mine  
Yet ne'er to own her.

*AL RASCHID.*

Not of flesh and blood  
I could have asked thus boldly to re-  
nounce  
Life's sweetest dreams. But thou, di-  
vine Giafar,  
Whose breath is thought, whose very  
soul a poem,  
Leav'st in the spirit's eagle-flight be-  
hind  
The common clay.

*GIAFAR.*

A eulogy which lauds  
The hero, yet omits the man, is painful,

*AL RASCHID.*

Thy modesty would e'en excel thy  
merit,  
If that were possible.  
Ere I depart

I would remind thee that this very  
night

We are to see Abassa. After sunset  
Meet at my palace and the moonlight  
hours

Will pass in sweetest concourse. How  
I love

This green oasis midst the desert's dust,  
Where I recuperate and gather strength  
For life's stern duties. Till tonight,  
farewell!

(Exit.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Alone.)

Fate is against me, vainly I rebel.  
I would not see Abassa, yet the will  
Of Haroun reigns supreme. I see the  
cliffs

Which threaten shipwreck to my drift-  
ing bark

And in this crucial hour this arm, by  
Nature

Unnerved, lets go the rudder. Nay, I  
will

Defy the Sultan's wish, plead illness,  
Fadhel,

Thy pride inspires me, ere the Barme-  
cides

Accept defeat, all hell must come to  
battle.

(Enter.)

*ABU NUWAS.*

I come to have you solve for me a problem.

*GIAFAR.*

Pertaining to the State?

*ABU NUWAS.*

Aye, to the man  
That made it, to—the great Giafar.

*GIAFAR.*

No longer great.

*ABU NUWAS.*

This is the very problem.  
Thy lyre which, unexcelled for many  
years,  
Has thrilled the hearts of men, is  
strangely mute!  
Thy eloquence, a memory! And the  
wisdom,  
Which guided Haroun and his realm  
alike,  
No longer stirs the council of the great.  
Why is't that Bagdad's favorite never  
smiles?

*GIAFAR.*

All this is natural. Life's empty plaud-  
its

Will tempt but him whose brow was  
never wreathed!  
And as regards my songs, they ceased to  
be  
When dreams came true, just as the  
mountain stream  
Merged in the sea, no longer plays with  
pebbles.

*ABU NUWAS.*

Thou art in love—this is the common  
talk!  
But such a love! Ye gods! A whiff  
of ether!  
An evanescent glance and then—fare-  
well!  
A kiss upon the eyelash, then—keep  
off!  
A shiver through the spine, and then—  
beware!  
A glimpse of pretty limbs and then—  
enough!  
This farce of Haroun starts a roar of  
laughter  
From Allah's throne to Satan's boiling-  
pots;  
It makes the merry world wheel 'round  
with humor—  
And thou, the hero of the comedy,  
Wear'st such a sorry mien! This is  
too much!

(Bursts out laughing.)

*GIAFAR.*

I know, thee, Nuwas, and thy reckless  
mocking  
To me is but a wave that laves a cliff.  
I have some honor and Giafar's pledge  
Must ne'er be broken!

*ABU NUWAS.*

Words disarm me not.  
What are such promises? Happiness  
comes first!  
If my poor arguments cannot convince  
thee,  
I'll quote the Koran; be thou like the  
prophet  
Who, whensoever a new skin roused his  
passion,  
Had heaven provide for him a special  
vision:  
Great was Mohamet—piety and plea-  
sure,  
Opposing elements, he merged in one.

*GIAFAR.*

Tramp thou not like a hog on beds of  
flowers;  
Thou livest for thy passing whims, but I  
Still aim to do on earth the will of  
Allah!

*ABU NUWAS.*

The will of Allah? What a crutch for  
cant!

Thou art not blind, Giafar, like the  
masses

That wet with contrite tears the pro-  
phet's beard!

The mosque contains not God, nor can  
the Koran

Set bound'ries to His word. He is the  
soul

Of every throbbing life; the flower that  
blushes

Beneath the rising sun reflects His  
Being

As much as does the star-eyed dome of  
heaven!

The soul of Allah quickens every  
stream,

And moves the mother-bird to build her  
nest;

It vibrates in the song of nightingales  
And cools us in the balm of cypress  
groves.

The soul of Allah wakes the poet's  
thoughts

And to the lover whispers words of  
wooing,

Until, o'ercome, he holds the glorious  
form

In his embrace. Believe me, oh Giafar,  
Such fond embrace is Allah's will as  
much  
As penitential prayers!

*GIAFAR.*

Thou art a poet,  
And I dwelled mid the Muses long  
enough,  
To know how to discern 'twixt words  
and facts,  
Where rhyme and rhythm rule. True  
to thy light  
Live on! But do not cloud my star of  
faith  
With philosophic mist.

*ABU NUWAS.*

It would not pain thee,  
Were not the voice familiar to thy  
heart.

*GIAFAR.*

Thy argument is echoed in my soul,  
Yet I oppose to it my claim to man-  
hood.  
I cannot lie.

*ABU NUWAS.*

Thou liest to thyself,  
If thou art true to Haroun; if to him  
Thou liest, thou art true to Allah's will.



Since thou must lie, Friend, follow  
my advice;  
And live the lie that has in it some  
spice!

(Exit.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Alone.)

Who sent this tempter here? This mix-  
ture strange  
Of truth and error, loftiness and lust?  
He feels for me, he says, and I have  
reason  
To trust his word. Aye, Nuwas, could  
I fling  
Aside each scruple of my inner self,  
I should not suffer thus. I'd claim the  
body  
Of my fair spouse, as I have claimed  
her soul!  
But to thy scoffing nature I will prove,  
That o'er the flesh, held captive, rises  
Love!

(Enter Omar.)

*GIAFAR.*

Praised be the Prophet! Is it thou,  
my Omar?

(As Omar enters Giafar rushes forward to greet  
him, but Omar assumes an attitude of  
haughty reserve.)

*OMAR.*

No longer thine; high mountains have  
arisen  
'Twixt thee and me, since last we met  
as friends.

*GIAFAR.*

Thy speech is dark; I do not grasp thy  
meaning.

*OMAR.*

Thou art a diplomat and subtle speeches  
Familiar to thy lips; but I, a soldier,  
Prefer the simpler way, the way of  
truth.

*GIAFAR.*

When shadows fall upon a sorrowing  
heart  
It craves a ray of love, just as the bird  
By tempests frightened, seeks the shel-  
tering tree.  
I never dreamed the deadly day would  
dawn  
When thou would'st hesitate to grasp  
this hand.

*OMAR.*

Nor I. Amid the shifting race of men  
Thou wast to me the rock immovable  
Where love could cast its anchor and  
remain

Secure forever. But, the fog dissolved,  
Truth finds the trap where fancy saw  
the drawbridge.

*GIAFAR.*

Speak'st thou of treachery?

*OMAR.*

Thou knew'st, Giafar,  
That I did love Abassa. Fatal flames  
Blazed from her eye into my inmost  
soul.

I raised her veil by force, I risked my  
life,

And since that day have oft in daring  
fight

Sought sweet repose in death. But e'er  
victorious

I rose from bloodiest strife. The Khalif  
honored

My reckless courage and at last agreed  
That, if I crushed the rebel Nicopherus,  
He would accede to whatsoe'er I wished.

I now return, by feverish longing  
spurred,

To clasp Abassa's form in burning arms,  
And find that thou, of all my friends  
the dearest,

Hast robbed the victor of his well-earned  
spoils.

Would I had never loved thee, glad I'd  
plunge  
This oft-tried scimitar into thine  
heart—  
Oh, such revenge were sweet!

*GIAFAR.*

Yet of the evils  
That trouble man, death, friend, is not  
the greatest.  
Thou dost me wrong. Abassa is my  
wife,  
Yet she is not; the Khalif's gift to me  
A star to be admired, yet not a form  
To be embraced. I speak sincerely,  
Omar:  
Take thou this gift, its raptures or its  
tortures;  
I want it not.

*OMAR.*

Oh, let deception cease.  
There is no living man in earth or  
heaven,  
Who, near Abassa, could command the  
flood  
Of passion. Thou its subject art, Gia-  
far,  
As well as I, and ill becomes the role  
Of abstinence to one whose amorous  
ditties

Have filled the empire with voluptuous  
thought.

*GIAFAR.*

The day will come when every syllable  
Thus lightly uttered, like a dart of fire  
Will pierce thy memory. By all the  
stars

Which shine in Allah's heav'n, I give  
my oath

That all thy charges, based on love's  
delusion,

Are void of ev'ry element of truth.

*OMAR.*

I did not come to argue; not in words,  
In deeds I have excelled. Farewell,

Giafar,

Thou bid'st me trust in the impossible.

Here is my hand, I will. If thou prove  
false,

My sky is black; meanwhile thou find'st  
in me

An open friend or open enemy.

(Exit.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Alone.)

This seals my fate. 'Tis now for me  
to prove

That friendship's true; that reason  
reigns supreme,

E'en in the blood's domain. I thank  
thee, Omar,  
With calmer eye I'll gaze in the abyss;  
Thou judgest me, but judgest me amiss.  
(Enter Zuleika.)

*GIAFAR.*

What brings you here, Zuleika?  
What's thy mission?

*ZULEIKA.*

I come, a messenger.

*GIAFAR.*

Sent by Abassa?

*ZULEIKA.*

Come close to me  
(Whispers in his ear.)

*GIAFAR.*

Tomorrow night! Ye gods!

*ZULEIKA.*

The eunuchs have been bribed; the  
gates are open,  
A boat will take thee to the eastern side  
Of the Seraglio; a slave will lead thee  
Hence to the chamber where Abassa  
sleeps.  
The moon is full tomorrow. After mid-  
night  
Thou art expected.

*GIAFAR.*

But I cannot go;  
The Khalif has my oath.

*ZULEIKA.*

Thy heart, Abassa.

*GIAFAR.*

Does she expect me in her private chamber?

*ZULEIKA.*

E'en on her couch—a paradise on earth!

*GIAFAR.*

Hush, temptress, for thy words do  
frighten me;  
I must not go.

*ZULEIKA.*

Is this thy final word?  
Farewell!

(Makes ready to go.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Struggling with himself; when Zuleika reaches the door.)

Tell fair Abassa I will come!

*ZULEIKA.*

(Leaving.)

So be it!

(Exit Zuleika.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Alone.)

All is lost! The rock of reason,  
The thought of father, brother, friend  
and honor  
Hurled in this hungry grave! My  
storm-tried bark  
Bows to the winds. If I need pardon,  
mercy,  
May Allah grant it! If defiance, bold-  
ness,  
I pray for that! If treachery be better,  
Be that my fortune! Prayers are hol-  
low sounds  
In this grim hour. Shout and rejoice,  
Giafar,  
Tomorrow night will end this farce of  
thought!  
'Tis destined all, and as the river,  
reaching  
The ocean's edge, lists vainly to the  
wooing  
Of native springs, so I must hasten on!  
(In the rear of the apartment is seen in dim  
outline the vision of Abassa.)  
My brain's aflame! Is that Abassa's  
form?  
Graceful and white, born of the dew of  
morn?  
Sweet image! I embrace, I clasp thee!  
Hence



Naught shall retard me. Cursed be  
suspense!

(Sinks fainting upon his couch; the vision  
vanishes.)

(Enter Obeidah and Khaled, who have been  
concealed.)

*KHALED.*

He struggled obstinately.

*OBEIDAH.*

Yet I knew  
That blood would triumph, and Zulei-  
ka's message  
Served as a final blow. Our sweet  
Abassa  
Will be quite unprepared for bridal  
pastimes.  
Ere some new scruple calls Giafar back,  
Make haste and get young Omar on his  
track.

END OF THIRD ACT.



## Act IV.



SCENE—The Seraglio. A part of the interior of the apartment is seen and a balcony revealing Hasfana dreamily gazing out on the starry heaven. The light of the full moon illumines the terrace and in the background the outlines of the city. The interior shows Abassa asleep on a couch. Obeidah and Khaled stand near the entrance, but remain unseen by Hasfana. The apartment is illumined by hanging lamps, perforated with Oriental designs; a chafing-dish in the center, whence emanate the fumes of powdered myrrh and benzoin.

### *HASFANA.*

How still the night! It wafts its moonlit dreams  
Upon the foliage of the cypress grove.  
Oh, blessed peace, come to this lonely heart!

(Singing.)

Hast loved and longed and lost.  
Sad Heart, what would'st thou more?  
The spar by the tempest tossed  
Is drifting at last ashore.

Art weary of tear and smile?  
Of the wreath of rose and thorn?  
Of the dream that pleases awhile,  
And passes as soon as born?

Like a child in an unknown land  
Dost wonder and worry and weep,  
Till Death with a mother's hand  
Rocks all thy sorrows to sleep.

*OBEIDAH.*

Is all arranged ?

*KHALED.*

All, but the haughty Omar  
Declined to play his part; scorned my  
advice  
And asked me scoffing if I knew the  
difference  
Between a dagger and a scimitar.

*OBEIDAH.*

That devil wants a hell-fire of his own  
To roast in. Is he apt to come tonight ?

*KHALED.*

I told him all; but he in senseless fury  
Paced up and down, a lion in his cage,  
And swore revenge.

*OBEIDAH.*

This simply means two nets  
To catch our bird in. Hark, here comes  
Giafar.



SCENE 2.

(Omar leaps over the balustrade, is heard but not seen by Obeidah and Khaled.)

*HASFANA.*

(In greatest agitation.)

Celestial vision! Oh, my heart! 'Tis thou!

(Hasfana has dropped the zither, and throws herself with head bowed, at the feet of Omar.)

*OMAR.*

The full-orbed moon has marked the hour; surprise  
Is out of place.

*OBEIDAH.*

(Still thinking Omar to be Giafar.)

The mouse is safely trapped!  
Thou'rt caught, Giafar! Guard the hallway, Khaled,  
The Sultan's waiting at the eastern gate,  
I'll bring him hither.

(Leaving.)

*KHALED.*

(Stopping him.)

Stop! If he should leave  
Ere thou returnest.

*OBEIDAH.*

Then apply the poniard.

*KHALED.*

Be quick. I need thee in this bloody  
hour.

*OBEIDAH.*

Fear nothing! Come.

(They disappear behind the drapery.)

*OMAR.*

(Who has looked silently and with folded arms  
upon the form of Hasfana.)

Arise, the moonlight shadows

Thy treach'rous eye.

(Leading her into the center of the room.)

Can'st look on me and blush not

For the deceptive part thou play'st  
'gainst me

In this most complex plot?

*HASFANA.*

So help me Allah!

I know not, noble Omar, what thou  
meanest.

*OMAR.*

Ha! Calloused villain! Innocence  
becomes thee!

Thou knowest nothing of the full-orbed  
moon;

Know'st nothing of the bridal night;  
know'st nothing

Of this appointment; aye, it were most  
strange

If thou had'st ever heard Giafar's name,  
Or of Abassa's love—

*HASFANA.*

Enough, Prince Omar!  
Crush not with iron heel the fragile  
    flowers  
Of my sad love for thee; I fain would  
    take it  
With me, a stainless mem'ry, unto  
    death.

*OMAR.*

Thou speak'st of sorrow, greater is mine  
    own;  
I loved Abassa, and the end—

*HASFANA.*

'Tis fate  
That rules the destiny of hearts, not  
    choice.  
Abassa loves another—loves Giafar.

*OMAR.*

Dar'st thou thus name the truth with  
    bold affront?

*HASFANA.*

The Omar whom I knew would e'er  
    demand it.

*OMAR.*

Quite right; Hasfana, I am mad, forgive me;

If thou dost love me, thou wilt pity me;  
Thou know'st that there are hearts with  
single purpose;

All else to them is naught. Thus did I  
cherish

The picture of Abassa in my heart.

*HASFANA.*

And thus in mine, I ever dreamed of  
Omar!

*OMAR.*

Would that our love were better placed;  
the fates

Have willed it otherwise. Tell me,  
Hasfana,

If ever love for me burned in thy heart,  
Know'st nothing of the meaning of this  
night?

*HASFANA.*

I swear by all the stars, thou doubttest  
falsely.

*OMAR.*

Know'st nothing of Abassa's secret mes-  
sage,

Know'st—

*HASFANA.*

Nothing.

*OMAR.*

Have they ever met alone?

*HASFANA.*

They have—

*OMAR.*

And on licentious couch—

*HASFANA.*

No, never!

*OMAR.*

Thou liest, maiden!

*HASFANA.*

Shame! Prince Omar, listen!

They parted as they met, no carnal contact

Has ever stained their vows. Giafar,  
firm,

Though suff'ring; while Abassa, sweetly  
dreaming,

Looked lovingly on him, who never uttered

The fatal word. I am their witness,  
Omar—

*OMAR.*

Hark! There are footsteps. I must  
not be seen



In these apartments. Let us be concealed  
Behind this drapery.

(Hasfana and Omar behind the drapery, which partly obscures the terrace from the general view.)

*GIAFAR.*

(Stepping slowly into the room, and perceiving no one, approaches the divan where Abassa lies sleeping.)

Thou dreamest, yet a maiden unpolluted  
By sensual embrace. Repose of innocence!

Nature in thee has formed her fairest  
image

And stops perplexed. Would that my  
soul could fathom

The meaning of this hour, much sought,  
much dreaded,

'Gainst which I prayed and wept and  
strove and struggled

Until at last, a feather in the wind,  
I drifted hither! Now, may come what  
will,

Death has no terrors after life has giv'n  
Its choicest fruit. Let fate prepare the  
worst!

(He stands musingly at the foot of the divan.)



*OMAR.*

(Partly concealed.)

Thou did'st not wholly lie, Hasfana;  
hatred  
Within me wars with pity.

*GIAFAR.*

(Kneeling and kissing Abassa.)

With this kiss  
I wake thee, loved one, for this hour of  
bliss.

*OMAR.*

(Aside.)

Oh, agony of rage!

*ABASSA.*

(Awaking.)

What sweet delusion!

(Recognizing Giafar.)

Thou here, beloved? Thou did'st send  
no word  
To tell me of it.

*GIAFAR.*

I received thy message;  
That was enough!

*OMAR.*

(Aside.)

Ha!

*ABASSA.*

Thoughts invisible  
Thou must have turned to ministering  
angels.

*GIAFAR.*

(*Agitated.*)

Did'st thou not send me word to meet  
thee  
Right after midnight?

*ABASSA.*

Ever I do long  
For thy dear presence, and if heav'n  
were starred  
With million luminaries 'twere but dark  
While thou art absent.

(*Embracing him.*)

Many a night I craved  
To rest within thy arms, but pitying  
Thy soul's vast struggle and our dread-  
ed fate  
I kept the word a prisoner on my lips.

*GIAFAR.*

Be it no longer thus. The fates implac-  
able  
Have fully planned the pathway of our  
love.  
Dost thou remember—

*ABASSA.*

All we ever dreamed  
Since first we met.

*GIAFAR.*

But thou had'st loved another.

*ABASSA.*

When I saw Omar, my young heart ex-  
panded  
In wondrous ecstasy. I loved his dar-  
ing,  
His haughty mien and manners; like  
a flower,  
Which, long kept shaded, struggles to  
the sun,  
I nursed the thought of him in love-  
thrilled soul.

*OMAR.*

(*Aside.*)

This torture kills me.

*GIAFAR.*

Enviably Mortal!  
Who witnessed love, the word surpass-  
ing sweet,  
Between thy lips, first bursting into  
bloom!

*ABASSA.*

'Twas passion, yet not love. Before I  
met thee  
I had no soul; I lived for beauty only  
Of form and face; it was my happiest  
moment  
To rise rejuvenated from the spray  
Of marble fountains, while the black,  
long curls  
Were streaming downward o'er my  
snowy form,  
A brilliant contrast. I would stand for  
hours  
Before the mirror as if fascinated  
By my own image. It was this Abassa  
Whom Omar loved and who in turn  
loved Omar!

*OMAR.*

*(Aside.)*

Oh, flames of hell!

*ABASSA.*

Then thou did'st come, Giafar,  
A palm at noontide. Why I loved thee?  
Vainly  
I would express it. First I loved thy  
thoughts.  
Which, like great stars, arose in my hor-  
izon,

Revealing worlds unknown; then 'twas  
thy presence,  
Thy winged and wondrous words, which  
came like music  
To all my soul. And when sad longing  
hovered,  
A dark'ning cloud upon thy lofty brow,  
My very self would melt into a balsam  
To give relief. Take thou this heart,  
this life;  
'Tis thine alone.

*OMAR.*

(Aside.)

Damnation! I am raving!

*GIAFAR.*

To linger in the twilight of our dreams,  
'Twere bliss indeed! But, ah, the dusk  
o'ertakes us.

Together, Love, we're journeying  
toward the night;

I am deceived; here is some treachery.  
If 'tis not thou who led my frail step  
hither,

Some villain plans my downfall. Let's  
be quick!

Abassa, thou art mine; prove then to  
me

This fondest truth. The entrance may  
be guarded;

We ne'er again may see the day-star's  
rise.

Yet, ere the wing of Azriel enfolds us,  
Press me in Love's embrace unto thine  
heart;

And doubly sweet will be the night's  
brief raptures,  
Death waiting at the door.

*ABASSA.*

Giafar, frightened  
I do behold thy face. Desist; 'tis mad-  
ness!

Flee, if thou art betrayed! Too dear  
thy life

Thus to be flung aside!

*GIAFAR.*

(Embracing her violently.)

It may be madness,  
But, Love, each minute counts. Thy  
hesitation

May rob me of the conquest which I  
merit

By all the agonies of sleepless nights;  
By all the tempests of this blasted  
brain;

By all I risked and ruined, loved and  
lost

In this unequal strife! On to the bridal  
couch!

Tomorrow—to the grave!

*OMAR.*

(Aside.)

What grim defiance!

*ABASSA.*

The sword of Haroun—

*GIAFAR.*

Aye, I fear it not.

I'd rather clasp thee in my arms and die  
In this embrace, than see thy virgin  
form

Deflowered by the ravishes of time.

*ABASSA.*

But think of thy renown—

*GIAFAR.*

The cheap applause

Of gaping throngs has been as naught to  
me,

Since first I loved thee; oh, my blood's  
afire!

I cast my name and fame into this  
cauldron

Of boiling passions.

*ABASSA.*

Do but think, Giafar,

Thou may'st regret—



*GIAFAR.*

For this I'll have no time;  
I'll die tomorrow. But this one sweet  
hour  
The envious gods shall not withhold  
from me;  
I want to feel these snowy arms around  
me,  
And fall asleep upon thy billowed  
breast;  
Aye, when thy black and burning eyes  
will close,  
I know that from my life the last star  
vanished  
And naught is left but death!

*ABASSA.*

I'll go with thee!

*GIAFAR.*

I feel a fever creeping through my  
brain.

*ABASSA.*

Ah, 'tis Zuleika's curse! Love is a  
flame,  
She said, of hell and passion born; it  
seeks  
Relief by spreading its contagious spell  
Upon another; when the fire is  
quenched,

A vampire sucks the essence of the soul  
And turns the darling dream into a  
nightmare.

Desist—

*GIAFAR.*

It is too late. The wild volcano  
Is bursting forth, and its destructive  
lava  
Creeps through my veins; be mine, thou  
tempting form,  
Or I must die of longing—

*ABASSA.*

(Rising, very serious.)

Whate'er thou askest  
Is thine. I've planned in many love-  
lorn hours  
For this sweet moment. On the eastern  
side,  
Whence thou can'st see the dawn climb  
o'er the hills,  
And watch the glimmer of the morning  
star;  
I've set apart a room for thee and me.  
There we'll repair for this enthrilling  
night,  
Half star, half cloud!

(Pushing aside a heavy curtain which reveals a broad starway. Abassa leads the way and reaches the first landing. Looking back at Giafar, who stands hesitatingly at the foot of the stairway.)

Ascend, it is thy wish!

*GIAFAR.*

I now can say my creed in one short breath.

Two things are certain only: Love and Death!

(He reaches the landing and lingers there in an intense embrace. They disappear slowly.)

*OMAR.*

(Stepping into the foreground.)

Thou told'st the truth, Hasfana, yet the truth

Will hardly aid thy cause. It is enough  
That even now the oath is being broken,  
So gravely pledged.

*HASFANA.*

Yet did'st not hear him say  
He was betrayed, and that he bravely  
struggled

Until some messenger lured him to  
ruin?

*OMAR.*

Yet both confessed that often they had  
planned

Upon this feast of love.

*HASFANA.*

Thy flaming eye  
Bodes ill for all; think of the fair  
Abassa.

*OMAR.*

It is this very thought that drives me  
mad.

*HASFANA.*

Giafar was thy friend.

*OMAR.*

The very reason  
Why I now hate him as I once did love  
him.

(Drawing his scimitar.)

Show me the way.

*HASFANA.*

By Allah, thou art mad.

*OMAR.*

Where is this couch of lust; show me  
the way.

*HASFANA.*

(Throwing herself at his feet.)

I've plead for fair Abassa, whom thy  
love

Should e'er protect; and for the doomed  
Giafar,

Who's been a friend to thee in storm and  
calm.

It profits little. Would a spark could  
fly  
From the consuming flame that burns  
for thee  
In this, my hapless heart, into thine  
own—  
Then might I add; for thy Hasfana's  
sake  
Refrain from violence; alas, the plea  
is vain!

*OMAR.*

(Impatient.)

I pity thee, but by the gods, I'm raving  
With wild revenge; think,  
Hasfana, e'en now  
He clasps her in his arms—

(Dragging Hasfana by the arm.)

Show me the way!

*HASFANA.*

Woe to the man who crawls that he  
might rise!

Is this Prince Omar, whom the world  
admires

As the great champion of dauntless  
courage?

He turns assassin and on helpless  
women

Lets out his violence.

(Aside.)

Ha, I'll mislead him!

(Pushing aside the curtain which leads to the exit where Khaled lies concealed.)

Proceed then—here's the way—the door is open!

(Omar rushes into the hallway with sword unsheathed.)

*OMAR.*

(Behind the curtain.)

Who is this snake which thus from ambush strikes?

Stand, coward!

(Fighting behind the scene. Khaled, pushed backward, becomes visible, then falls.)

*KHALED.*

I'm undone! A fatal error!

I took thee for Giafar.

(Voice grows faint.)

All is lost!

Obeidah left me in the lurch. I'm dying!

(Becomes unconscious.)

*HASFANA.*

The fight has roused the eunuchs, many voices

Are drawing near. Flee, ere thou art discovered;

Who enters here, is lost; e'en thou, Prince Omar.

*OMAR.*

A timely council!

(Rushes to the terrace, but halts suddenly.)

Ha! They watch the garden!

Must I who've sought a thousand deaths  
in battle

Now perish like a rat on burning ship?

*HASFANA.*

I'll save thee, Omar.

*OMAR.*

Nay, I'd rather die!

Our ways are parting and to owe my  
life

To thy too gen'rous hand which to pos-  
sess

The fates declined to me; this, proud  
Hasfana,

Is more than Omar's honor will permit.

*HASFANA.*

Thou can'st repay my aid, not with thy  
heart,

For 'tis not thine to give, but with an  
off'ring

More gen'rous and in keeping with thy  
kind.

Escape and soften Haroun's angry  
mood

Towards the lovers who in death-  
thrilled transports

E'en now make ready for a cruel fate.

*OMAR.*

Abassa and Giafar—ah, within me  
They rouse all hell!

*HASFANA.*

The Sultan is to blame.  
He forced this union on Giafar's heart.

*OMAR.*

Did not Giafar ask Abassa's hand?

*HASFANA.*

He merely bowed to Haroun's will, not  
thinking  
That there was woman who could melt  
his heart  
As did Abassa.

*OMAR.*

'Twas a grave mistake!

*HASFANA.*

We must not dally longer; I hear foot-  
steps  
Approaching fast. Take thou this ring  
and show it  
To him who guards the outer entrance,  
whither  
This hallway leads.

(Pushing aside a curtain.)

Upon its recognition  
He'll let thee pass. Begone!



*OMAR.*

Come thou with me!

*HASFANA.*

If thou did'st love me, to the brink of  
death;  
Now—never!

*OMAR.*

Maiden brave, how can I thank thee!

*HASFANA.*

Protect my hapless mistress and her  
lover.

*OMAR.*

Thou shalt excel me not in gen'rous  
deeds;  
I'll save them, though the heart within  
me bleeds!

(Exit.)

*OBEIDAH.*

(Entering with guards.)

Who desecrates these sacred halls with  
bloodshed?

*HASFANA.*

(Pointing to Khaled.)

A spy who paid the final penalty.

*OBEIDAH.*

(Recognizing Khaled.)

He's stirring still ;

(Stabbing him.)

Thus perish infamy !

*KHALED.*

Obeidah—traitor !

(Dies.)

*OBEIDAH.*

Where's the hand that slew

This wretch contemptible ?

*HASFANA.*

He offered insult

And when he dared, I struck him with  
my dirk.

*OBEIDAH.*

A sword has wounded him. I want the  
truth.

*HASFANA.*

It was thine own sword then, there was  
no other.

*OBEIDAH.*

Stand thou aside ; hey, eunuchs search  
the house,

The Khalif does command it ; stop at  
nothing.

Abassa's room demands your special  
care.

*HASFANA.*

(Defiantly.)

Thou darest not; I am my mistress'  
guard  
And I permit no insult—

*OBEIDAH.*

(Pushing her aside.)

Place the chains  
Around this pretty hand.

*HASFANA.*

(Drawing a dagger.)

The first who dares—  
Attack a hungry lion with a reed;  
'Twere wiser than to show a weaponed  
front  
To one prepared to die.

*VOICES.*

Peace, here's the Sultan!

(Enter Al Raschid.)

*AL RASCHID.*

What's this disturbance? Has the  
house been searched?

*OBEIDAH.*

We were about to do so, when this  
slave  
Dared to oppose us.

*AL RASCHID.*

Put her into prison.

Will all my realm rebel and every up-  
start

Defy the mighty Ruler of the Faithful?  
On with the search!

(A curtain is pushed aside; Giafar steps for-  
ward, calm and with dignity.)

Alas! 'Tis thou, Giafar!

*GIAFAR.*

Great Khalif, trouble not the innocent;  
I am thy prisoner.

END OF FOURTH ACT.



## Act V.



SCENE—Interior of the Sultan's Palace. Al Raschid in the center, Obeidah at his side. Officials of State assembled.

*AL RASCHID.*

The ship of State demands a steady  
hand

Amid the treach'rous cliffs that threaten  
it.

We've warred with foreign foes and e'er  
victorious

The crescent rises o'er a wondering  
world.

The emp'ror Nicophorus seeks, defeated  
At Omar's hand, humiliating peace.

This has been granted. When our foes  
are crushed

It does behoove us to be merciful.

With greater care we view the inner  
storm

Which has swept o'er us. Grand Vizier  
Giafar

Has proved himself unworthy of the  
height

Where I had placed him; he has hurled  
himself

Into a vast abyss. The love I showed  
him  
Has been the dirk with which he  
stabbed his Master;  
Much have I loved him; I now hate  
him more.  
Bring in the prisoner.

(Enter Giafar with guards.)

It is but justice  
That thou should'st speak ere yet thy  
doom is sealed.

*GIAFAR.*

I, shipwrecked on a desert isle, in vain  
Look for the leafy grove of sympathy.  
The sun of justice sends its scorching  
ray  
Upon my heart, laid bare, yet it shall  
lighten  
As well as burn. The vow I broke, I  
gave  
Not knowing that there is a Power Su-  
preme  
Which rules the Sultan and his slaves  
alike—  
A power that tosses us from dust to  
dust  
And lights the interval with passion's  
ray  
Not minding our intents. If any  
mercy

Is granted me, I pray for her whose life  
To mine is sadly linked.

*AL RASCHID.*

To thee, Obeidah,  
I leave his punishment. Let justice  
rule!  
Lead off the prisoner; his presence  
pains us.

(Obeidah follows the guards, leading Giafar  
away to the door, and gives some private  
instructions.)

(Enter Omar.)

Here comes the glory of the Moslem  
host,  
A sunbeam bright to cheer this cloudy  
day,  
Prince Omar.

*OMAR.*

Haroun, what I've done is little  
Compared with what I'd do, if chance  
permitted.

*AL RASCHID.*

We know this, Omar, and to show how  
well  
We treasure thy proud deeds, ask for a  
favor  
And whatsoe'er it be, we'll gladly grant  
it,

E'en to the very limits of our realm.

*OMAR.*

Too great thy kindness.

*AL RASCHID.*

Name whate'er thou wilt.

*OMAR.*

Great Khalif, I could ask the fairest  
pearls

Which slumber in the deep of all the  
oceans;

Could ask for kingdoms, crowns and  
palaces.

I want them not. Much simpler my re-  
quest:

I ask thee, Haroun, for Abassa's free-  
dom.

*AL RASCHID.*

A strange demand from thee; yet, be it  
granted!

*OBEIDAH.*

It is too late; Abassa is no more.

*OMAR.*

Dead, tyrant?

*OBEIDAH.*

Aye, the law demanded it.



*AL RASCHID.*

Ask something we can grant. We cannot raise  
The dead from out their tomb.

*OMAR.*

Still there is time  
To save Giafar, who e'en now has left  
This hall.

*OBEIDAH.*

They stabbed him in the anteroom,  
Lest his glib tongue might reach the  
tender heart  
Of his too gen'rous master.

*AL RASCHID.*

Thou art quick,  
Obeidah. Be thou wise as well. Prince  
Omar,  
Ask something not exceeding human  
powers.

*OBEIDAH.*

I see a singular flame in Omar's eye  
Which doth reveal to me his inner  
thought;  
I'll aid his cause. Guards! Hither lead  
the slave.  
(Hasfana is led into the center. She is veiled.)  
Great Khalif, Omar loves this soft-  
skinned female,

And, though her actions rash deserve  
thy anger,  
Thou might'st, considering the chief's  
renown,  
Give for a pastime him this pleasing  
toy.

*OMAR.*

Sagacious as a fox thou art, Obeidah,  
And as the pelican, most generous—  
Thy kindly counsel's given ere 'tis  
sought;  
But in this matter suffer me to balance  
Thy judgment 'gainst my own

(Addressing Hasfana.)

Hear me, Hasfana,  
Abassa's dead; Giafar is no more;  
Wilt thou be Omar's slave? Then take  
this hand  
In token that this be thy heart's first  
wish;  
If not, raise up thine arm and thus as-  
sure me  
That thou will'st otherwise.

*OBEIDAH.*

Why thus consult her?

*OMAR.*

Because I'd have it so.  
(Hasfana lifts her arm and keeps it raised.)

Courageous maiden!  
I grasp thy thought and bow to thy decree!

(To the Sultan)

I now can ask the favor?

*AL RASCHID.*

Speak; 'tis granted.

*OMAR.*

Am I quite certified that this be so?

*AL RASCHID.*

Thou hast my word; I never break a promise.

*OMAR.*

And I am sure this favor can be granted!

*AL RASCHID.*

Then it is thine!

*OMAR.*

Hear then, oh mighty Khalif,  
And all ye ministers who are in council  
Assembled here; bear witness that I  
have

The Sultan's word.

(Pointing his finger toward the Grand Vizier.)

I want Obeidah's head!

END OF FIFTH ACT.





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